



William Shakespeare

*The Tragedy of Othello,  
The Moor of Venice*



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# ACT I

## SCENE 1

Venice. A street.

Enter Roderigo and Iago.

RODERIGO. Tush, never tell me!  
I take it much unkindly  
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse  
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

IAGO. 'Sblood, but you will not hear me.  
If ever I did dream of such a matter,  
Abhor me.

RODERIGO. Thou told'st me thou didst  
Hold him in thy hate.

IAGO. Despise me, if I do not.  
Three great ones of the city,  
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant,  
Off-capped to him; and, by the faith of man,  
I know my price, I am worth no worse a place.  
But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,  
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance  
Horribly stuffed with epithets of war,  
And, in conclusion,  
Nonsuits my mediators; for "Certes," says he,  
"I have already chose my officer."

And what was he?  
Forsooth, a great arithmetician,  
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine  
(A fellow almost damned in a fair wife)  
That never set a squadron in the field,  
Nor the division of a battle knows  
More than a spinster—unless the bookish theoretic,  
Wherein the toged consuls can propose  
As masterly as he. Mere prattle without practice  
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the election;  
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof  
At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds  
Christian and heathen, must be belee'd and calmed  
By debtor and creditor. This counter-caster,  
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,  
And I—God bless the mark!—his  
Moorship's ancient.

RODERIGO. By heaven,  
I rather would have been his hangman.

IAGO. Why, there's no remedy.  
'Tis the curse of service,  
Preferment goes by letter and affection,  
And not by old gradation, where each second  
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself  
Whether I in any just term am affined  
To love the Moor.

RODERIGO. I would not follow him then.

IAGO. O, sir, content you.  
I follow him to serve my turn upon him:  
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters  
Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark

Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,  
That doting on his own obsequious bondage  
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,  
For naught but provender, and when he's old,  
cashier'd.

Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are  
Who, trimmed in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,  
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,  
Do well thrive by them; and when they have lined  
their coats,  
Do themselves homage. These fellows have some  
soul,

And such a one do I profess myself.  
For, sir, it is as sure as you are Roderigo,  
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.  
In following him, I follow but myself;  
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,  
But seeming so, for my peculiar end.  
For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In complement extern, 'tis not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

RODERIGO. What a full fortune does  
the thick-lips owe, if he can carry't thus!

IAGO. Call up her father,  
Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight,  
Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen,  
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,  
Plague him with flies. Though that his joy be joy,  
Yet throw such changes of vexation on't  
As it may lose some color.

RODERIGO. Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud.

IAGO. Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell  
As when, by night and negligence, the fire  
Is spied in populous cities.

RODERIGO. What, ho, Brabantio!  
Signior Brabantio, ho!

IAGO. Awake! What, ho, Brabantio!  
Thieves! Thieves! Thieves!  
Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!  
Thieves! Thieves!

Brabantio appears above, at a window.

BRABANTIO. What is the reason of this terrible  
summons?  
What is the matter there?

RODERIGO. Signior, is all your family within?

IAGO. Are your doors locked?

BRABANTIO. Why? Wherefore ask you this?

IAGO. 'Zounds, sir, you're robbed!  
For shame, put on your gown;  
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;  
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram  
Is topping your white ewe. Arise, arise!  
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,  
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.  
Arise, I say!

BRABANTIO. What, have you lost your wits?

RODERIGO. Most reverend signior,  
do you know my voice?

BRABANTIO. Not I. What are you?

RODERIGO. My name is Roderigo.

BRABANTIO. The worser welcome.  
I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors.  
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say  
My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,  
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,  
Upon malicious bravery, dost thou come  
To start my quiet.

RODERIGO. Sir, sir, sir—

BRABANTIO. But thou must needs be sure  
My spirit and my place have in them power  
To make this bitter to thee.

RODERIGO. Patience, good sir.

BRABANTIO. What tell'st thou me of robbing?  
This is Venice; my house is not a grange.

RODERIGO. Most grave Brabantio,  
In simple and pure soul I come to you—

IAGO. 'Zounds, sir, you are one of those  
that will not serve God, if the devil bid you.  
Because we come to do you service and you  
think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter

covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have  
your nephews neigh to you; you'll have  
coursers for cousins, and jennets for Germans.

BRABANTIO. What profane wretch art thou?

IAGO. I am one, sir, that comes to tell you  
your daughter and the Moor are now making  
the beast with two backs.

BRABANTIO. Thou art a villain.

IAGO. You are a senator.

BRABANTIO. This thou shalt answer;  
I know thee, Roderigo.

RODERIGO. Sir, I will answer anything.  
But, I beseech you,  
If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,  
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,  
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,  
Transported with no worse nor better guard  
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,  
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor—  
If this be known to you, and your allowance,  
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;  
But if you know not this, my manners tell me  
We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe  
That, from the sense of all civility,  
I thus would play and trifle with your Reverence.  
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,  
I say again, hath made a gross revolt,  
Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes  
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger

Of here and everywhere.  
Straight satisfy yourself:  
If she be in her chamber or your house,  
Let loose on me the justice of the state  
For thus deluding you.

BRABANTIO. Strike on the tinder, ho!  
Give me a taper! Call up all my people!  
This accident is not unlike my dream;  
Belief of it oppresses me already.  
Light, I say, light!

He exits.

IAGO. [to Roderigo] Farewell, for I must leave you.  
It seems not meet, nor wholesome to my place,  
To be produced—as, if I stay, I shall—  
Against the Moor; for I do know the state,  
However this may gall him with some check,  
Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embarked  
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,  
Which even now stands in act, that, for their souls,  
Another of his fathom they have none  
To lead their business; in which regard,  
Though I do hate him as I do hell pains,  
Yet, for necessity of present life,  
I must show out a flag and sign of love—  
Which is indeed but sign.  
That you shall surely find him,  
Lead to the Sagittary the raised search,  
And there will I be with him. So, farewell.

He exits.

Enter Brabantio, in his nightgown, and Servants with torches.



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